Field Notes on Investigation of white discharge at Seattle Iron & Metal
7-22-08

Received ERTS complaint #607150 on 7-21-08 regarding a white foamy discharge to the Duwamish River at Seattle Iron & Metal (SIM) that was taking place (approx 3 pm). The complaint was referred to Seattle Public Utilities (SPU). I talked with Brian Robinson from SPU at about 4:30 and he volunteered to contact the complainant to get more information.

I made arrangements to meet with Brian (SPU) at SIM on S. Myrtle Street at 10:30 on Tuesday July 22. I contacted Eric Paul, Assistant V.P. of Operations upon our arrival and explained that we would need access to SIM to investigate the complaint. He said that SIM had a discharge to the river from their treatment plant on the day in question. We meet with Mr. Paul and looked at site drainage maps and discussed the treatment plant discharge. We showed Mr. Paul the photos taken by the complainant from the river the day of the discharge.

Mr. Paul got the plant operator to join the meeting and answer our questions. Apparently he started up the treatment system around 2:30 pm to draw down the vault and gain capacity. The system was run for about 2 hours and discharged approximately 20,000 gallons.

I requested that SIM submit an incident report to Ecology (Ed Abbasi) that addressed the treatment operation and discharge. (why was the operation started when there has been no rain for 2 ½ weeks, how much was treated, by who, what was the quality of the effluent, were samples collected, was the operation "normal", what could have caused the excessive foaming at the river, what specific chemical additives went into the process on the 21st, was the strong sulfur order in the treatment plant normal and any other information that would be pertinent.

We then went to the treatment plant and there was a very strong rotten egg odor in the building. The floor drains had some white residue around them. The DAF tanks were in circulation mode and not discharging. Mr. Paul assured me that the floor drains in the treatment plant building went to the sanitary sewer.

We then looked at the sand filters and followed the discharge line to the point where it joins the city storm drain system from S. Garden Street. We looked at the discharge pipe to the river with the rubber flapper gate. The dock area was in need of source control. I saw maintenance being performed on a large dump truck on the dock. I would consider it a permit violation to conduct or perform heavy equipment maintenance on the either one of the docks.

Issues and Recommendations:

SIM must submit a written incident report to Ecology with all pertinent information pertaining to the start up, operation and discharge of the treatment system on the afternoon of July 21, within 5 days.

The site drainage map must be reviewed, verified and updated as necessary. The floor drains in the treatment plant building must be included. As-builts for the vault, effluent line and overflow lines must be also included.

Maintenance activity was observed on a large dump truck on the dock. The truck was leaking fluid or fluid was spilled during maintenance. Equipment and vehicle maintenance should be prohibited from the docks

All stormwater hitting either dock must be collected and routed to the on-site system. To allow any stormwater to flow to the river from either dock is a violation and must be prevented.

SIM should notify Ecology prior to the next treatment plant start up and discharge to allow Ecology an opportunity to be present, observe the discharge and split samples with SIM.

Track out of oil and metal particulates onto S. Myrtle Street could be seen. This loading will flow to the Duwamish River via the city storm drain system that outfalls on the riverbank at the west end of S. Myrtle. SIM must do a better job of minimizing track out all and entrance/exits at the facility. Monitoring of the city storm storm drain system down stream of SIM should be considered/required.

Maintenance logs of all storm drain system maintenance must be kept on site.